

To: Campaign Finance Legislative Assistants
From: Chairman Dan Burton, Committee on Government Reform
Date: January 18, 2000

PUNISH CAMPAIGN FINANCE FRAUD WITH MORE THAN A SLAP ON THE WRIST

BI-PARTISAN MEANINGFUL CAMPAIGN FINANCE LEGISLATION WE CAN ALL SUPPORT!!

Dear Colleague:

Wherever one stands on the political spectrum, there's one piece of meaningful campaign finance reform we can all agree on – the need to put some teeth into the enforcement of existing laws against using “straw donors” to cover up campaign donations from anonymous sources, including illegal foreign contributions.

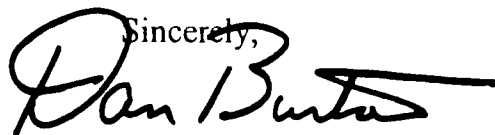
Congress, the Federal Election Commission and the Justice Department need to “get tough” when phony “straw donors” are used to cover up the true sources of campaign donations. They're called “conduit contributions,” and they've been at the heart of virtually every campaign finance scandal in the last decade.

Incredibly, however, “conduit contributions” are still punishable only as a misdemeanor. As the Washington Post stated on May 11, 1999: “It is well past time for a law that privately addresses conduit contributions as a felony offense.”

H.R. 1747, “The Conduit Contributions Prevention Act of 2000,” does just that. Not only is the penalty for willfully and knowingly making a “conduit contribution” increased to a felony, but the Federal Election Commission is required to make a Justice Department referral in every instance where probable cause exists. In addition, the legislation stiffens considerably the civil penalties that can be imposed by the Federal Election Commission for violations.

Fifty Members, listed on the back, have already co-sponsored this vitally important effort to get tough on fraudulent “conduit” contributions. Won't you join us? I earnestly believe this is a step we can all take, together, toward meaningful campaign finance reform.

If you or your staff have any questions, or would like media help in planning your announcement of co-sponsorship, please call either Jim Wilson or Kimberly Reed at 225-5074, or e-mail kimberly.reed@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Dan Burton